Urban Literature: A User's Guide

Carlo Rotella[1]

Abstract

This article addresses urbanists in various fields—history, the social sciences, planning, and more—who are interested in incorporating literary works into their teaching and research and may be looking for critical approaches that connect such work to their own expertise. It begins from the premise that the traits that make a city a city present writers with opportunities to tell stories, experiment with form, make meaning, and otherwise exercise the literary imagination. When we use "urban literature" as a category of analysis, when we try to identify relationships between cities and the writing produced in and about them, we are asserting that this writing takes shape around confronting the city as a formal, social, and conceptual challenge. This article explores examples of texts ranging from *Sister Carrie* to *I Am Legend* and beyond that engage signature urban processes such as urbanization, development, and the dense overlap of orders.

Keywords

urban literature, urban film, urbanization, development, teaching

Whether you are a literary scholar with an interest in the city or an urbanist in another field—history, the social sciences, planning—looking to incorporate literary works into your own research or classroom teaching, you operate within the same defining parameter: to call a work of literature "urban" is to claim that reading it in relation to the city will get you somewhere, analytically. When you assert that, say, Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905) and Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987) can be read together as New York novels, or that the industrial city was one of American realism's great subjects, or that science fiction can serve as a kind of laboratory for anticipating and testing out the consequences of changes in urban form and function, you take on an obligation to show how the writing addresses, registers the influence of, or otherwise exploits traits that make a city a city.

Social scientists have been refining their list of those traits for more than a century. It includes density, anonymity, central place function, high property values, cosmopolitanism, hybridity, the concentration of trade and capital, the production of culture and knowledge, serving as a seat of government, and many more. Density heads the list because it is the key item that organizes all the others. "Urban" refers to a density of densities, the concentration not just of people but of materials, capital, and the human transformation of nature; the concentrated presence of social, economic, political, and cultural processes; thickly interrelated ways of life, different kinds of communities layered together. So even other classic defining urban characteristics, such as the presence of many strangers or a city's functioning as a central place in relation to its hinterlands,

[1]Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, USA

Corresponding Author:
Carlo Rotella, Director of American Studies, Boston College, Stokes Hall 4th Floor S, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, USA.
Email: rotellca@bc.edu

can be seen as expressing different kinds of density. By this definition, "urban" is a relative term that describes a continuum, rather than an absolute distinction; no single trait on the list is unique to cities, but the relatively dense concentration of many of those traits is a hallmark of the city. Even on a farm or in a desert, you may well encounter anonymity, property values, and cosmopolitanism, but those traits will tend to be more densely present in a town, still more densely present in a regional capital, and most densely present of all in a major national or global metropolis.

These traits that make a city a city present writers with opportunities to tell stories, experiment with form, make meaning, and otherwise exercise the literary imagination. When we use "urban literature" as a category of analysis, when we try to identify relationships between cities and the writing produced in and about them, we are asserting that this writing takes shape, at least in part, around confronting the city as a formal, social, and conceptual challenge. (I say "writing" for the sake of concision, but the broad construction of literature I employ goes beyond novels, short stories, poems, and nonfiction to include movies, songs, and more.) Treating literature like literature means engaging not just the *what* of its content but the *how* of its form. How do you capture the essence of a complex place with words? How do you use the form of the novel or perhaps the haiku to consider how the density of market relations or land values bears on lives and mentalities? How do you tell the story, repeated everywhere around the world, of country people coming to the metropolis and becoming city people? We do not need to ascribe to the artist the explicit intent to "do" the city, but we do need to show how that artist's work shows the influence of the city—in its form, themes, provenance, or motive ideas, or in some other way. The work does not need to be primarily or transparently about city life, and its notion of the city can be derived from other works of literature rather than from real-world models, but to justify calling it urban we must show how it bears the marks of those qualities and material conditions that make a city a city.

As a final prefatory step before we dive into some texts, let us draw a distinction, and trace a connection, between *a* city and *The* City. In addressing the category of urban literature, we consider individual cities, each with its own literature that engages that place's unique details of geography and demography, its distinctive history, its own fingerprint-unique pattern of the flows of people and capital and resources and ideas that shape urban life. But we also address a cultural composite, The City, assembled out of especially resonant bits and pieces drawn from individual cities and representations of them. The constituent elements and resonant meanings of The City change over time. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, for instance, Chicago was America's shock city, a brutal, dynamic, wildly expansive tangle of contradictions that exemplified for many observers the modern industrial city produced by urbanization, immigration, and especially industrialization. And while Chicago's shock-city status lasted, representations of it figured prominently in national and even international discourse about the emergent human future. Miami, Las Vegas, and other Sun Belt capitals have more recently had similar, if briefer and less commanding, stretches in the limelight as American shock cities. So has Detroit, which after the riots of the 1960s seemed to exemplify the imminent collapse of American urbanism and then settled into the role of the postindustrial metropolis as postapocalyptic wasteland—though Chicago has made a negative sort of comeback to prominence in recent years, threatening to eclipse Detroit as our leading exemplar of a major city reduced to failed-state levels of dysfunction by gun crime, racial division, the decline of the middle class, and other ills concentrated in the inner city. Stereotypically clean, green, and high-tech Seattle has often served as Detroit's and Chicago's positive opposite. And Los Angeles and especially New York City, while by now perhaps too familiar to serve as shock cities, play perennially large roles—not just as subjects but also as producers of widely consumed culture—in the composite-making process that generates The City.

In considering examples of literary works that exploit some of the characteristic traits of cities, the selection that follows does not attempt to cover the widest possible range of the most important works, genres, historical periods, or cities. It is a sample, not a survey, and it proceeds by showing how literature engages and figures some signature urban processes selected from a much longer list. The intent is to show some of the reach and power of "urban literature" as an analytical category that allows us to read all kinds of works in relation to the city and to each other.

Urbanization

Urbanization refers not only to the transformation of landscape but also to what goes on inside the minds of people who come to the city. From the nineteenth century novels of Balzac and Zola to current works coming out of China and Africa during our own era of grand-scale global urbanization, the story of a country person becoming a city person is a staple of urban literature.

One of the most concisely eloquent American examples of such a narrative is Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" (1832). Set in pre-Revolutionary America, it tells the tale of Robin, a young man from the rural hinterlands of New England, who comes to a Boston-like metropolis intending to call upon a powerful relative, Major Molineux, who holds high office in the British colonial regime and is, therefore, situated to help Robin make his way in the big city. After a series of misadventures in a disorienting and hard-to-read urban landscape, events that demonstrate Robin's naive unpreparedness for the political, sexual, and other complexities of city life, he witnesses a popular uprising during which Major Molineux is tarred and feathered and ridden on a rail. Rather than return home in defeat, Robin, who finds himself participating in the general hilarity over his powerful kinsman's humiliation, discovers to his own surprise that he has become acclimated to city life and wishes to remain.

The overthrow of the colonial official upon whom he was counting for advancement becomes a figure of the overthrow of the hierarchies and assumptions that constituted Robin's provincial mentality. Once that transformation has taken place, the previously forbidding city opens before him as a place of possibility in which his new, urbanized self might feel at home and prosper. Several of the city's signature traits are on display in this story—among them, its traditional function as both a seat of official political authority and a prime location for revolutionaries to contest that authority—but it is the psychological and cultural process of urbanization itself that organizes the story's various thematic threads into a coherent whole.

Perhaps the most canonical American example of the story of urbanization told at book length is Theodore Dreiser's novel *Sister Carrie* (1900), which follows the progress of Carrie Meeber, a small-town girl from Wisconsin who comes to Chicago in 1889. As she seeks work, stays with and then leaves her married sister, takes up with a man, finds her way onto the stage, takes up with a different man, moves on to New York, realizes she does not need a domestic affiliation with a man to get by, and eventually finds success if not fulfillment on Broadway, she gradually acquires the skills and mentality of a city person: she urbanizes. The novel proposes a kind of rhyme between Carrie and Chicago—both young, unfinished, and rising toward the full realization of their powers. Moving to New York in its second half to explore the full arc of both Carrie's career on the stage and her transformation into a city person—two faces of the same process of assembling a self out of the scripts and props afforded by the fast-growing consumer culture of the time and the desires of other urbanites—the novel assembles a definitive turn-of-the-century vision of The City out of two individual cities. One (New York) was already established as the preeminent example of American urbanism, and the other (Chicago) was a shock city growing into its designated role as the face of the urban future.

The variety of language in *Sister Carrie*, singled out by critics first as a weakness and then as perhaps the novel's greatest strength, also demonstrates how the cities we imagine on the page

are assembled from often disparate parts. For decades after its publication, critics took Dreiser to task for his supposedly uneven writing, which sounds in one place like a sociological tract and in another like a magazine melodrama, sentimental novel, travelogue, or shopping list. But this same mixing of registers eventually came to be recognized as one of *Sister Carrie*'s principal virtues: a way that its form acknowledges and attacks the problem of finding authoritative ways to tell stories about the city and about urban subjects. If we read for the "drama of representation," the more or less veiled account any literary work provides of how its teller assembled the wherewithal to tell it, we can see *Sister Carrie* as making a point of assembling its toolkit for narrating the city out of a mishmash of different kinds of contemporary writing and talk. The novel's very language replicates the kind of density of difference that shapes both the city and the mentalities of its inhabitants.

   Sister Carrie has been updated many times; it is a story we frequently retell. In *The Little Sister* (1949), for instance, Raymond Chandler uses the toolkit of the crime novel to repurpose some of Dreiser's elements—an ambitious small-town girl come to the big city, a problematic sister with a confining romantic attachment, a theatrical career, and so on—in the form of a noir set in Hollywood. And *Blade Runner* (1982), a landmark science fiction film set in a spectacularly dark, toxic, polyglot Los Angeles of the near future, recognizably retells the story of *Sister Carrie* as well. This time, the prospective urbanites come from outer space and are replicants (part-human machines) with a yen for "more life" in at least two senses: they wish not only to extend their brief life-spans but also to achieve the full range of human feeling and meaning. Like escaped slaves who flee to northern cities in nineteenth-century slave narratives, the replicants— especially Pris, a cyborg built to resemble an inexperienced but vital and almost instinctively theatrical young woman in the Carrie Meeber mold—share Carrie's expectation that the city, for all the manifest inhumanity of its often oppressive economic and social arrangements, is the place where they might improvise an existence that accords with their notion of being fully human.

Development

Development is the process of changing the value of a piece of land by altering it in some way: cultivating it, building on it, and so on. Redevelopment, the process of changing already-developed land's value by altering it anew, is the most common form of development in cities, where pristine land is rare. The tendency over time in urban development is typically, although not always, toward greater density of value and people, greater city-ness: replacing farmland with a suburban subdivision, tearing down low-rise housing to build high-rises. Development happens throughout the landscape, but it is an especially powerful and defining force in cities, where population density, property values, the concentration of capital, and the density of the human impulse to carpenter the landscape all tend to be higher.

   Because development happens most densely in cities—because it is one of those qualities that help make a city a city—it presents urban literature with rich opportunities to exploit. Take, for instance, William Dean Howells's novel *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), in which a man of humble provincial origins amasses a fortune in the paint business and moves up in Boston's social hierarchy until he meets disaster and finds himself ejected entirely from both the moneyed classes and the city. The novel's central tension pits the rising force of industrial capitalism against the residual influence of aristocratic privilege, a contest between the opposed potencies of new money's sheer wealth and old money's cultural advantage in taste and other such distinctions. At his high point, Silas has a million dollars, which especially in the nineteenth century had the status of a magic number marking the point at which all things become possible, but he never has enough cultural capital of the right kind.

Everything the novel has to tell us about social class, competing conceptions and strata of culture, the risks and rewards of becoming a city person, the Gilded Age's boom-and-bust cycle, the gendered rules for navigating urban space, the twinned flows of capital and hormones that add up to the city-shaping force of desire, or any other subject comes by way of its account of development. To get in position for their daughters to marry into the exclusive precincts of Beacon Hill, the Laphams decide to vacate their insufficiently prestigious quarters in the South End and build an intermediate advance base in the form of a fine new house on the New Land, the Back Bay neighborhood created by a recent landfill project that has expanded the city of Boston's surface area and created a zone of overlap between new and old money. The novel's elegantly intertwined money plot and family plot are arranged on the armature provided by this figure of urban development. When an architect hired to design the new house subtly tries to improve the Laphams' taste, when the handsome Harvard-educated scion of the aristocratic Corey family impresses the Lapham sisters by lecturing them on what books their father must put in the new house's library, when Silas burns down the unfinished and uninsured house by accident and thereby assures his own financial ruin and perhaps (at least as his resolutely uncitified wife, Persis, sees it) accomplishes his own moral salvation, we see over and over again how the novel's other themes all climb up the framework of its account of development like morning glory vines on a trellis.

The development theme allows us to read *The Rise of Silas Lapham* not just in relation to the history of Boston and to other American realist novels of its period with which it is usually grouped (including *Sister Carrie*), but also in relation to other works that take form around analogous interests. For instance, the influential French realist Emile Zola's *La Curée* (1862) offers some of the same elements. Set during the titanic reordering of Second Empire Paris, its money plot traces the opulent fortunes of the Saccard family and its family plot traces their descent into semi-incestuous degradation. Baron Haussmann's mid-nineteenth-century redevelopment of Paris—razing whole quarters to make room for new boulevards, erecting new buildings that afforded opportunities for the profiteering that produced a new class of rich speculators—provides Zola a central metaphor and structuring device very similar to the creation of the New Land in Howells's novel.

And we can go farther afield in genre and period by tracing similar elements—to, for instance, the retro-noir crime movie *Chinatown* (1974), in which the family fortune is even grander and the moral crisis even more urgent. The money plot gradually reveals the extent of the wealth and power of Noah Cross, who owns large chunks of Los Angeles circa 1930 and enjoys a near-monopoly on political and economic influence by controlling the water supply that gives the city life. The family plot turns on Cross's rape of his own daughter, a crime that has produced a granddaughter on whom he now has similarly awful designs. An intrepid private eye's investigation of an affair and then a murder provides the story's forward momentum, but the structural armature on which the money and family plots intertwine is a redevelopment plot. Cross's imperial desire to own the future, expressed so pathologically in his lust for two generations of female offspring, centers on an audacious scheme to turn the orange groves of the San Fernando Valley into built-up city blocks.

Overlapping Orders

One of the most important forms of urban density is the overlap of different orders—different ways of organizing power, space, and city life. Look around a city, and you can see physical evidence of these orders arranged in historical layers. In a typical contemporary downtown, you might see steel-and-glass skyscrapers, a poured-concrete convention center, a confluence of highways connecting the city to its suburban surround and airport and to the region and nation beyond. This is a city organized around handling information and providing services. But poke

around a bit and you will see the bones of an older city with a different form and function: a landscape organized around railroad tracks, port facilities, low-rise workers' housing, and red-brick factory buildings—a place designed to turn raw materials into finished goods. And, at least in the Northeast, you might find your way to remnants of an even older commercial city under that one, a city of churches and green commons oriented to its waterfront and sail-driven or canal-borne trade.

The persistence of older orders and the succession of newer ones is a foundational theme and representational habit of urban literature. One sees such overlaps in so-called literary fiction—in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, for instance, in which new industrial money and older aristocratic money derived from the China trade stand for two overlapping Bostons. And one sees these overlaps as well in what is called genre fiction, the constellation of popular formulas that includes crime stories, romance, fantasy, science fiction, horror, and many more categories. Both *Chinatown* and *Blade Runner*, for instance, feature a detective hero whose investigation of some kind of surface crime—marital infidelity and murder in the former, the replicants' bloody escape and subsequent offenses in the latter—enables the unearthing of deep crime, the foundational injustices that structure the world of the story. The formulas of genre fiction give us a well-stocked toolbox of storytelling devices with which to exploit the qualities that make a city a city, including the dense overlapping of orders.

Take, for example, Richard Matheson's pattern-setting novella *I Am Legend* (1954), in which Robert Neville, the last normal man in a plague-ridden city, defends himself against fellow citizens transformed into undead monsters. In *I Am Legend*, a blend of science fiction and horror that reeks of its historical moment, the plague is associated with Cold War anxieties such as the fear of nuclear and biological attack and a deep suspicion of the power of propaganda. Neville's situation is a black-comic cartoon of Fifties Man as a type: holed up in a modest suburban-style house in Los Angeles, he fortifies himself with booze, steak, and middlebrow culture against zombie-vampires who try to lure him from the relative safety of his home by playing on his painfully repressed sexual urges. This standoff resolves only when a new threat appears: people who have been infected by the plague but can control its effects, thereby constituting a middle term between Neville and the monsters. Watching these new-order beings efficiently dispatch the undead, Neville asks himself, "Is this the new society?"[1] This is an operative question such stories are well equipped to ask: what persists of the old, and what succeeds it, and on what terms is the struggle between the orders contested? Such questions give added thematic and historical resonance to, for example, Neville's own residence in Compton and wanderings in Inglewood, areas in which black residents succeeded whites after World War II. The prosaic overlapping of demographic orders moves beneath the fantastic inventions of the plot, inspiring Neville to joke drunkenly with himself about "minority prejudice" leading to discrimination against the undead. "Sure, sure," he thinks, "but would you let your sister marry one?"

Matheson's story has been retold many times, with more or less explicit acknowledgment of debt to the original (which, in turn, retells older last-man stories). Among the iterations of the same basic narrative, a literature layered to reveal a succession of cultural orders that parallels the layering of urban orders, two film adaptations stand out.

In *The Omega Man* (1971), Neville, reimagined as a military research scientist and played by Charlton Heston, holes up in downtown Los Angeles in what looks like a postapocalyptic Playboy swinger's pad, complete with wet bar, lounge music, mod art, and a sports car in the garage below. The black-cloaked, technology-phobic mutant freaks spouting revolutionary jargon and hurling Molotov cocktails at his redoubt are genre-fiction renderings of hippies, Black Panthers, junkies, and muggers—period boogeymen who haunted the streets of The City in the aftermath of the riots and crime scares that pushed the notion of urban crisis to cultural center stage during the 1960s. The urban crisis was itself about the overlap of orders: not just the counterculture challenging the establishment or the ghetto and barrio succeeding white-ethnic immigrants' urban villages but, more deeply, the long decline of the industrial city of downtown and neighborhoods

set against the difficult emergence of the postindustrial metropolis of inner city and suburbs. Using the equipment provided by genre fiction, *The Omega Man* imagines these overlaps as a violent struggle played out in a depopulated, debris-strewn downtown recognizable as the era's worst urban nightmare come to life. But the movie also uses its toolkit of genre moves to imagine a resolution between opposed principles. This time, the monsters are not undead but merely ill, and the emergent new order—the middle term between Neville and the monsters—is a benign interracial community of young people, infected with the deadly virus but protected against its effects by a vial of Neville's own plague-proof blood, who leave the city to start over in a sort of countercultural commune made possible by Neville, a martyred father figure who embodies the Establishment.

The film *I Am Legend* (2007) rearranges the story's elements in ways we can recognize as period-specific to the early twenty-first century. Neville, played by Will Smith, is now at bay in a townhouse on Washington Square in New York City. The shadow-dwelling creatures, which are again not technically undead but rather reduced to inarticulate feral malignity by a virus, are now clearly more akin to zombies—specifically, the "fast zombie" variant of the popular figure—than vampires. That is an important shift, because there is a big difference in resonance of meaning between vampires (cosmopolitan, cerebral, louche, often grown rich over their extended life-spans) and zombies (local, dimwitted, gruntingly conventional in their desire for living flesh, and utterly without possessions over the brief course of their brutish existences). This retelling can be read as a period piece pitting the privileged "One Percent" against the other 99 percent, a trope that began to circulate widely in the culture right around the time of the movie's release. A documentary titled *The One Percent* was released in 2006, and the Occupy Wall Street movement would put the idea in even wider circulation in 2011. The recent proliferation of zombie narratives can be seen, in part, within a larger tendency to see the elite at war against the masses, the special few against the undifferentiated and perpetually hungry many. Vampire narratives, from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) to the journalist Matt Taibbi's description of Goldman Sachs in 2010 as "a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money," typically reverse the polarity of this formula by relocating upward into the elite the fundamental hunger to devour the essence of others.[2] However the conflict between elite and masses might be framed, the city, with its communities of haves and have-nots living in dense proximity to each other and crossing paths in public space, provides a resonant stage set for it. City-specific postapocalyptic conventions, both thematic (like the collapse of government and its monopoly on legitimate violence in urban places where institutional power was formerly concentrated) and visual (like grass growing in the streets, an old image that enjoyed a fresh burst of popularity during the Y2K scare), suggest how high the stakes of such conflict can get.

Well-educated, impressively fit from a regimen of nutritionally balanced meals and strenuous workouts in his home gym, toiling with great discipline to discover a cure for the plague, Will Smith's Neville comes off as a patron saint of early twenty-first-century income inequality. He covers the walls of what would be a multimillion-dollar home, if property values still mattered after the viral apocalypse, with pricey art he appears to have culled from New York's museums, and employs elaborate security precautions to defend himself and his excellent stuff from the ravening have-nots who move in the darkened streets outside. Tested audiences for the movie reacted against one potential ending in which a moment of understanding between Neville and the monsters' leader averts mutual destruction, preferring an ending that destroys them both in explosive mayhem that yields a fresh start: a young woman and a boy bearing a vial of the again-martyred Neville's plague-resistant blood find their way out of the city to an idyllic New England town surrounded by forbidding walls and armed guards. This time, in keeping with the ideological tenor of the moment, there is no compromise between orders: the 99 percent are left behind in the ruined city, and the One Percent flee in an SUV to a gated community on the new frontier.

Were there room to go on forever, we could run through sequences of mutually resonant literary works that exploit each of the many traits that help make a city a city. We could assemble, for instance, Gwendolyn Brooks's *A Street in Bronzeville* (1945), Ann Petry's *The Street* (1946), and *Do the Right Thing* (1989) into a string of texts that explores the possibilities of neighborhood narrative, in which the impulse to map the dense particularities of the local encounters broader metropolitan and even global-scale influences. We could examine how the first-person immigrant self renders itself in formative motion across the cityscape, exploiting the city's traditional role as a destination for immigrants, by reading Alfred Kazin's *A Walker in the City* (1951) and Teju Cole's *Open City* (2012). We could compare accounts of the city as a center where political power is established and contested—by, for instance, comparing questions of ethnic belonging raised by election campaigns in Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995) and the movie *Gangs of New York* (2002). We could seek out accounts of the city as a center for the production of culture in works such as the film *The Sweet Smell of Success* (1957) and Wolfe's novel *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, which in their treatment of newspaper journalism take the typically subtextual drama of representation and move it to the foreground, making the problem of writing the city part of the story's explicit action. And, of course, we could go city by city, assembling a literature for each that exploits not just general urban qualities but particular traits that distinguish, say, Memphis (one might start with Thomas McNamee's *A Story of Deep Delight* [1990]) from Butte (on which Dashiell Hammett based his invented burg of Personville, aka Poisonville, in *Red Harvest* [1929]). Each of these strings would show how different works arrange and rearrange similar Lego pieces of plot, theme, language, and other literary features around some shared urban trait, be it a general process such as development or a specific historical figure or event. Their shared impulse to exploit the literary possibilities of some facet of city-ness allows us to read them together despite the kinds of critical distinctions that draw lines between texts according to period, genre, art form, and nation.

In making such moves, we should never settle for treating literature as merely a window on material reality. Rather, we pursue an understanding of how the literary imagination has engaged the historically shifting problem of the city. *The Rise of Silas Lapham* is not merely a representation of the New Land produced by landfilling the Back Bay; it is a satisfying novel because Howells came up with an elegant double-helix structure to tell a story about money and a story about marriage that were both about urban culture and both mapped onto a changed urban space. *Native Speaker* does not merely think about the consequences of post-1965 immigration; it is a compelling novel because it tells the same story twice, once about language and once about politics, and shows how the first rendition of the tale can be an American triumph and the second an American disaster. And the structural affinities between these two double-plotted novels, offering similar formal solutions to the problem of how to tell an urban story, give us a basis for reading them together. Social science may have given us names for the list of qualities that make a city a city, but it is the work of literature to develop and redevelop that material to exploit its rich aesthetic and imaginative possibilities.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

Notes

1.   Richard Matheson, "I Am Legend," in *I Am Legend* (1954; repr., New York: Tor, 1995), p. 158.

2. Matt Taibbi, "The Great American Bubble Machine," *Rolling Stone*, April 5, 2010, accessed July 13, 2017, http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-great-american-bubble-machine-20100405.

Author Biography

Carlo Rotella's books include *Playing in Time, Cut Time, Good with Their Hands*, and *October Cities*. He contributes regularly to the *New York Times Magazine*; for five years he wrote a regular op-ed column for the *Boston Globe*; and his work has appeared in *The New Yorker, Harper's, The Best American Essays, American Quarterly*, and *Critical Inquiry*. He is a founding coeditor of the Chicago Visions and Revisions series at the University of Chicago Press. A recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and the Whiting Writers Award, he is director of American Studies at Boston College. He is at work on a book about South Shore, a neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago.